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http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/groups-plan-rally-to-support-removal-of-toxic-mine-tailings/article_95c1b377-8997-549d-8cb5-b61db43ac4a5.html



Tailings water

SUSAN DUNLAP/For The Gazette

Bureau of Mines and Geology scientist Gary Icopini pumps a bucket full of water that is blue because of to copper contamination from a well at the ball field behind the Civic Center.

2015-08-12T12:04:00Z 2015-08-12T23:50:29Z Groups plan rally to support removal of toxic mine tailings near Butte

By Susan Dunlap For The Gazette The Billings Gazette

August 12, 2015 12:04 pm • [By Susan Dunlap For The Gazette](#)

[Parrot Tailings removal: Will EPA listen to citizens, local government?](#)

The Montana Standard is to be commended for its recent in depth analysis of the Parrot Tailings issue on Sunday, July 19. [EPA resists calls to remove mine waste in the center of Butte](#)



BUTTE — Below the center of Butte flows water tainted with poisons drawn from a mass of mining and smelting waste that has been a pollution pr... [Read more](#)

BUTTE — While the Environmental Protection Agency, Butte-Silver Bow, the state of Montana and Atlantic Richfield continue to discuss the fate of the underground Parrot plume in confidential negotiations, local groups rally to support removal of the toxic mine tailings.

Seven groups, headed by Project Green, are planning a rally to restore Silver Bow Creek at 6 p.m. Thursday. The event will begin at the locomotive south of the Butte Civic Center, 1340 Harrison Avenue. A stroll will then commence along the Parrot corridor toward the Visitor's Center. A trolley will take participants back to their vehicles at the Civic Center after the rally ends.

Representatives from the Butte Natural Resource Damage Council, the Clark Fork Watershed Education Program, and Butte Citizens Technical Environmental Committee will be on hand to talk about the contamination and show conceptual renderings of the current proposal to clean it up.

Northey Tretheway, president of Project Green, said the rally is important because the future of the community resides on people coming together over this issue.

"Butte has a lot of pride in its history and what this town represents to the state and to the country," Tretheway said. "But we have to have pride not just in what it's been, but in its future, in making this one of the more livable communities."

The Parrot plume has long been a point of contention between EPA and Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The plume is the result of underground tailings from decades of smelting and copper precipitation work dating back to the late 1800s. The site of the former Parrot Smelter is where the ball field is located behind the Civic Center today.

The EPA says an underground system already in place is adequate to capture all of the contaminated groundwater flowing to Blacktail and Silver Bow creeks. The capture system includes a pipe with holes in it that lies 5 feet below the surface. The state says the Parrot plume is about 50 feet deep, and given the plume's depth, the five-foot deep pipe can't capture it all.

Rich Day, president of the George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited - one of the 7 groups participating in the rally - called the EPA's capture system "a band-aid on a severed head."

Day pointed to the toxic water full of heavy metals now flowing through the Animas River as an example of what might happen to Silver Bow Creek if something isn't done about the corridor of contamination that lies from the Civic Center to the Visitor's Center. The Animas River spill

started near Durango, Colo., and is now flowing through northwest New Mexico. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that more than 3 million gallons spilled from the long-defunct Gold King Mine north of Durango. New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez declared a state of emergency as the mustard-colored water continues to head unabated downstream. No one yet knows the long-term side effects of that toxic spill.

"Given what's happening in (the Animas) River ... it makes sense to (clean up the Parrot corridor), it's common sense," Day said.

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